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SERMON DCXL.

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LIFE'S CHANGING CURRENT.

"Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer, with all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries."—1 CHRONICLES xxix. 29, 30.

By "the times that went over him," the inspired writer obviously means the series of changes in the varying history of David's life, wrought by the progress of time, and completed when the monarch and bard of Israel was gathered unto his fathers. David had been a conspicuous character; many changes had crossed his path; though not wholly unsullied by vice, still many virtues adorned his brow; elevated by a special providence to the cares and perils of a throne, he discharged the duties thereof with fidelity to his God; and having reigned forty years, seven in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem, "he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor." His acts, his reign, his might, and "the times that went over him," were deemed worthy of a record for transmission to a future age.

In the meditations of this morning, let us then direct our particular attention to the exceedingly suggestive phrase which occurs in the latter of the above verses,—"*And the times that went over him.*" It is obvious that what was true of King David, is substantially true of every man. "The times" are passing over all; and though but few can hope to secure even a brief chapter in the annals of the world, still every one has his own individual life. To him it is an interesting scene, in prospect, and in retrospect: it is his life; and "the times" that pass over him, are matters of the most lasting moment to himself. The mutations and modifications of one's being, as he passes down the stream of time; the never ceasing

current of changes to which he is subject, in which he so intimately shares, and by which he is to be so permanently affected; the steady and uninterrupted action of causes within him and without him, all tending to some final result—this to the eye of meditation is far more imposing and solemn than the rare though striking incidents of life. Such a theme befits the present hour. It is appropriate to the instructive suggestions of the closing, and the opening year.

The general fact of change with the progress of our years, admits of no denial. Who in this audience is now in all respects just what he was one year ago? To whom is the past year a perfect blank, leaving him exactly where it found him, with not a solitary trace to show that he ever enjoyed such a period? To whom has it been nothing but a mere lapse of time? This is true of none; and if not so for a single year, then most certainly not for that longer term which measures our sojourn on earth. The truth is, we are constantly changing. Every moment, like every year, leaves its mark behind it. Though the foot of time fall ever so noiselessly upon our path, still the impress is there; and it is well to remember that it is not so much by sudden and startling phenomena as by the continued succession of little events, that great results are accomplished in the bosom of our existence. We are apt to be insensible to the amazingly productive power of these little changes. They are so regular in their occurrence, multitudes of them so much unnoticed at the moment, and some of them so entirely beyond our control, and without our agency, that it is only by collecting the results into an aggregate that we become the affected observers of what has transpired. To-day is like yesterday; yesterday is like its predecessor; and a day is such a common article, that, except by a special effort, we fail to notice the progress of our years, or the vastly important impress which it leaves upon our being. Could we, however, retrace our steps, and give back to each moment what it gave to us, detaching the effect from ourselves, and reinstating it in the bosom of its cause; could we then assemble these fleeting moments, each loaded with some relic of our history, and labeled with its peculiar contribution to our present state; perchance we might, by passing the eye up and down the group, form some idea of "the times" which have passed over us,—of the multitudinous agencies at work within us and upon us, ever repeating their own action, and adding some new item to the texture and fashion of our progressive life. Such a vision, could it be taken, would make us almost doubtful of our own identity. Change, change, nothing but change, would salute the eye from all points of the mental horizon. It is marvellous that man can be so wonderfully altered in the course of a few years; and yet remain essentially the same being. It is marvellous that such a varied series of events can be crowded into so small a compass. Truly, man is "fearfully and wonderfully made," bearing the signature of God in his endowments, and containing the elements of a great destiny in their history.

This general statement of life's changing current, will perhaps address our minds with more power, if we pause to observe some of the particulars which it embraces. To these let me then invite your attention.

I. Time makes a deep mark upon the body, the least important portion of our complex nature. This truth appears at a glance. Look into any

community ; and how readily we classify its members under certain denominations, which bear impressive testimony to the work of time. Here are those whom we call *infants*, just entered upon the scene of life, of all animated creatures the most helpless, and aside from the lessons of experience giving least promise for the future. They will not long retain their present condition. Coming into existence impressed with the law of development and growth, they will soon cease to be what they now are. Let time touch their susceptible nature, adding thereto the effects of its plastic hand, and they will be moulded into *children* ; the physical imbecilities of infancy will disappear, and these once helpless objects be ready for the sports and gambols of early life. Add a little more time, and they have passed on to the stature and comparative maturity of persons in the full prime and activity of ardent and hopeful youth. Subjoin another measure of time, and they are men and women in the strong and well developed vigor of completed manhood, having reached the acme of their physical being, and become ripe for the stern and laborious pursuits of life. Add another quantity of time, and the work of decay has begun its desolating ravages. The process once commenced, goes forward with increasing rapidity, till life becomes a burden, and the wearied frame at last drops into the dust under the accumulated infirmities of its own continuance. Hence, the difference between infancy and childhood, childhood and youth, youth and manhood, between the latter and old age, is simply a question of time. "The times" as they pass over us, create these wide and impressive variations in our physical condition. The particular point that we occupy in the series, is to be determined by the number of years that we have lived.

We are quite familiar with this succession of changes, so much so as perhaps hardly to give it a thought ; and yet when we pause for reflection, we cannot fail to see a most solemn procession of events, steadily advancing in a line parallel with the progress of our years. The powers which "the times" give and mature, they take away : the edifice which they rear with such careful and prolonged agency, they demolish ; they develop and dissolve, ripen and blast, with equal certainty, bringing to perfection the very being they mean to destroy. The creature that goes up for a season, no sooner reaches the altitude than he begins to go down, increasing in the momentum till his grave opens and covers him from human sight. In both directions, the process is slow and silent ; yet the effect keeps accumulating till it amounts to the total reality, which to the eye of thought is a most wonderful fact.

Nor should we forget that over our entire path from the first moment to the last, is always suspended the possibility of death. Comparatively few of our race pass through all the stages of life. What multitudes fall in infancy and early childhood ! How thin the ranks of the aged by reason of early deaths ! That event, which "is the last of earth," is the liability of every moment. When it will come, to whom, and how, and where, is known only to Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Let us ever remember this impressive and solemn liability, as we proceed in the journey of life.

II. Equally marked is the effect of "the times" as they pass over us, upon our *intellectual* nature. We have minds as well as bodies ; and by

their peculiar qualities are distinguished from the brute that perisheth, being fitted to rise far above the sphere of animal existence here, and destined to rise still higher hereafter. Man is an incarnate spirituality, mind and matter, the material and the spiritual, in intimate relation with each other. His body is but the casket, the tabernacle, the temporary home and convenience of the spirit, in which consists by far the largest part of his significance. When the one returns to the earth as it was, the other returns to the God who gave it.

The history of our purely intellectual nature from the commencement to the terminus of our present career, the changes to which it is subject, and the great advancement which it makes, are much more remarkable than the physical phenomena of our being. We are apt to note only the more striking developments of intelligence; and yet the mind of the commonest man, if we consider the point of its departure and the limited period of its expansion, is a wonder by the amount of its progress. Where did it begin? Where was it, and what was it, but a few years since? The little infant that you caress with so much fondness, knows almost nothing; it can neither appreciate your feelings, nor form the remotest idea of its own destiny as an intellectual being. What it is to be?—whence it came? and whither it is going?—these are questions that come not within the field of its thoughts. Judging from what it is in the outset, without reference to what we infer by the light of experience, we should never suppose the infant to be a miniature of the future man. The two as compared, present so many broad contrasts, and seem so vastly unlike, that but for experience we should not have the faintest conjecture that we were looking upon the same being, or that such a stupendous alteration upon the face of intelligence could be made in so short a time. The truth is, that even a common man, having nothing to distinguish him from the crowd, and knowing about as much as his neighbors, and no more, is a rapidly developed giant, so much in advance of what he once was, as to have lost nearly every mark of intellectual identity. It is not possible for him to retrace his own history, and recount the millions of little operations by which his present condition is connected with his former one; yet nature and time have been steadily occupied in turning the infant into a man. Considering the brevity of the process, the utter destitution of knowledge with which it began, and then the actual progress made in the space of a few years, well may we be astonished at the spontaneous growth of the human intellect—that growth which the forces of nature necessitate almost without our effort. It indicates a species of immensity, compressed, and so to speak, laid up in the structure of man's soul.

We are, however, more likely to appreciate the contrast produced by the hand of time, when contemplating minds of remarkable qualities, highly gifted by nature, eminently favored by Providence, and intensely charged with the exciting stimulus of some commanding pursuit,—the three circumstances that ordinarily unite in the formation of a great man. Washington the infant, and Washington the hero and the statesman! Is it possible that we are looking upon the same person? We are. We can follow the man of so much historic grandeur down to the crude and undeveloped elements that lie slumbering in the bosom of a child, without a solitary indication of their wonderful future. All the striking contrasts

that we observe, have arisen from "the times" that have passed over the infant Washington. Observe a Newton in his cradle; and how unlike the same being, in a few short years expanded to the dimensions of the illustrious philosopher, and dazzling the world with the restless energies of thought! Who would have supposed that the infant, judged by the then existing appearances, could have ever handled orbs and marshalled suns, dashing off into the fields of immensity, defining and demonstrating the laws of the material universe? Have we the same being in the two cases? Exactly so. We can trace the philosopher back to his cradle, too ignorant to know even his mother, and too feeble to support his own frame. What capacities are there unseen, waiting for the successive changes of time and nature to unfold their glories! How broad the intellectual space between the infant Napoleon, sleeping in his mother's arms, and the same Napoleon charged with the terrible genius of war, and grasping the fate of empires in his hand! "The times" have passed over the former, and changed him into the latter.

Thus we see that time is the great interpreter of the human intellect, showing us what it is, for what God has made it, and to what it can attain. And if such vast changes may occur in so short a time; if a being of apparently so little promise, may so soon acquire such mental magnitude; if there be that in man which admits of such a work in the limited period that lies between his first and last breath; ah! if these things be so, who then can compute his intellectual prospects for a boundless immortality? The facts, as we observe them on earth, are prophetic of an eminence, a vastness, a progress and acquisition of the future thinking being, that transcend all our efforts at measurement. The times as they pass over us, not only decipher the contents within us for present purposes; but equally point forward to what we shall be, when the hindrances of flesh and blood are laid aside in the grave. They reveal the glories of our intellectual constitution, demonstrating, upon the diagram of events, gifts that are fitted for an immortal range. We see the glimmerings of the future man, as we contemplate the history of the present one. We see capacities given that, in a proper development, may fulfil those precious promises with which the Bible makes eternity luminous, and heaven so attractive.

III. Not less striking or important is the stamp of time upon the history of our *sensibilities*. Man is neither all body, nor all intellect. What we call feeling, or sensibility, and that, too, under almost endless modifications, is as much a part of our nature as thinking. Who does not know what it is to have a feeling—to be thrilled with emotion, or burn with the ardor of restless desire? Who is not competent to distinguish such a state from one that is purely intellectual? Every man has science enough for so simple a task. Feeling is an original element of our existence.

In the outset of life, our sensibilities are almost wholly locked up; the emotions and desires, propensities and affections, dispositions and aversions, that are to be wrought into the structure of the future man, are hardly in the bud; and yet time, in the regulated order of nature, and by the appropriate objects, will bring all this subtle and sensitive mechanism into action, fashioning the man of *feelings* as well as of thoughts. The

susceptibility is the original gift of God; its laws come from the same source; but its development is the work of time. God made the mysterious harp, and gave to each string its peculiar note; but "the times," as they pass over us, are commissioned to awaken the music of our sentient nature.

It is doubtless true also, that the native susceptibilities of all men are the same; so that no one ever had a feeling which, in its *kind*, was absolutely peculiar to himself, and could not without a miracle have occurred in any mind but his own. This must be true, or there could be no science upon the subject applicable to the race. The same desires, the same emotions, the same native affections, the same classes of sensibility, and the same general laws of development, are the common inheritance of the species. In this respect what one mind is, that all minds are. Each is a pattern of the whole race. If you say that you have been happy, then let me assure you, that your neighbors also have been happy; and from experience know what the word means as well as you do. If you have been sorrowful, then remember that others are not strangers to the idea of sorrow. If strong desires have moved you to action, others have felt the same impulse. If hope has built her bower on your path, think not that you are the only beings who have enjoyed the pleasures of hope. If you have been enraptured with the beauties of nature, so, too, have others relished the magic of the same power. The truth is, every essential and original feeling, which it is possible for any one to have, is the property of the race. What God has given to one, that he has given to all; and hence we are able to comprehend and verify the experience of others in the facts of our own.

Yet, though not in contradiction of the above statement, how wide a diversity in development and combination, marks the history of human feeling! How far is it from an even monotone! How variously the same heart has been exercised during the space of seventy years! Sometimes it has been swollen with bitter anguish, and at others leaping with joy; sometimes buoyant with hope, and at others jaded with disappointment; sometimes glowing with love, and perhaps at others fired with rage. Man would be a curious spectacle to himself, if he could daguerreotype upon his intelligence a perfect image of his own feelings, as they lie scattered here and there along the path of life—an image that should give all the hues and shadings of the total reality, blending each item with the whole, and yet leaving each so distinct as to be seen by itself. He would be astonished at the sight; and could hardly think himself the identical person who had passed through so many phases and multitudinous combinations of feeling, indeed that so many tunes could have been played in one heart. If he were to philosophize upon the image, and connect all its parts in the order of time and the relation of cause, and then trace back the fleeting succession to infancy, he would have a perfect solution of those settled and fixed conditions of the sensibility, by which he is now marked. He would see how one thing has arisen from another; and how the countless exercises of his sensitive nature, linked in a long series of related events, have finally ended in his present style of feeling. There is a very curious history spread along the path of one's life, and lying between the susceptibility given and the modification acquired. All we want, is eyes to see it; and could we perfectly see it,

we should know much more of ourselves, and better understand the reasons why we are what we are.

It is worthy of note, that the lapse of time produces *natural* changes of feeling; and hence childhood, youth, manhood, and age, are characterized, each by its peculiar tendency. No one of these periods can assume the exact type of the other. Nor should we forget that our sensibilities, lying, as they do, in the rear of the intellect, come forth in connection with the *objects* upon which the latter is fixed; and that they must of course vary with the character of those objects. Add the law of habit in its power to solidify feeling, to transform an occasional exercise into a permanent condition, and cut deeper and wider channels through the heart; and we have at least some clue to the philosophical geology of our sensibilities. We see how it is that men, with the same original stratum of feeling, the same elements and laws of sensibility, differ so widely in the secondary formations of the heart. Time, with its natural change, with its objects ever acting through the intellect, and its law of habit indelibly imprinted on the creature, is at the bottom of the whole process.

IV. The most important change connected with time, is the one that refers to our *moral* and *spiritual* state. If the body, the intellect, and sensibility bear testimony to the work of time, the same is impressively true in respect to moral character. As the times pass over us with whatever influences they bring, they make a deposit in every man's soul. No one has a given quantity of goodness or viciousness, which he retains permanently without any modification; he will soon have more or less of the same article. There is no absolute and unchanging *status* of human character, that defies the impression of all agency. Though in its kind a fixture, too much so to be radically changed in every twenty-four hours, it is nevertheless a growth, a steady and constantly accumulating acquisition, adding new elements of power, and new grades of progress. This is alike true of the good and the bad.

Providence places before your eye a man of very depraved and abandoned character. You are pained at the spectacle of his grossness and wickedness, and feel astonished that such baseness can find a home in any human heart. Could he twenty years ago have foreseen what he now is, he perhaps would have been as much astonished as you are. His present condition is not the work of a moment; he has gone down by degrees under the repeated applications of evil influence, each step preparing him to take a lower one, and all at last collecting themselves in the appalling result that now meets your eye. Thus the tender child and the disgusting monster are linked by the intermediate agencies, which convert the one into the other. By no possibility can the transition be made in a moment. Depravity in any and every form, under every type of expression and mode of indulgence, observes the law of growth; and hence it must be radically uprooted, and give place to a new species of moral life, or its ill-fated victim will be steadily travelling the downward road. Sin does not contain its own cure. He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin; and the longer he continues, the more absolutely fixed is his position. To disregard moral restraints, to set the laws of God at defiance, and sometimes the laws of men, becomes increasingly the habit of his life. No year passes over his head, and hardly any day, without adding to the

dire catalogue of causes, that are slowly but certainly working out his ruin. These causes are distributed in such small quantities, and then repeat their action so frequently, that they often prove fatal without being seen. They kill by the continued succession of little blows. No one seems to endanger life; yet each adds to the destructive power of every other, and all when put together, do the work. What multitudes of our race have lived to illustrate this gradual and progressive depravation of character, going down to deep darkness here, and sinking into endless night hereafter! He who is travelling this road, has an evil augury upon the face of his being, casting its portentous shadows upon the bosom of eternity. The process must be changed, or the times as they pass over him, will ere long place him beyond the reach of hope.

We have the same law in respect to the growth of virtue. A strong, solid, and matured state of moral excellence is the product of time. He, for example, who spent the year just closed in the service of God, seeking to conform his life and heart to the will of Heaven, has entered upon this year very differently furnished from what he would have been, had his course been the exact opposite. He retains for future use the good effects of past virtue. Let him spend the present year in the same way; and he will have made some advancement ere it closes. Let him spend all his remaining years in obedience to the will of God; and his last hours will give noble evidence to the growth of the Christian virtues in his heart. Every act of prayer, every exercise of faith, every instance of self-denial, every deed of love, all unite to swell the current of moral power, on which a good man is borne into heaven. The times as they pass over him, are ripening him for the skies. While depravity sinks, virtue rises with the progress of her years. She goes up, little by little, steadily, patiently, happy in the duties of each day, commencing and closing each year with God, till her earthly discipline is lost in the perfections and felicities of the endless life. Not so much by that which is striking and occasional, as by that which is constant and regular, does she fit herself to put on the robes of immortality. These little successions, like the particles of dust in composing the great globe, ultimately make the aggregate in the structure of a holy character. They require time for the display of their power; yet with the lapse of time they are steadily making their indelible mark. No sublimer spectacle can be found on earth, than that of a truly good man undergoing the culture of a gracious regimen, and then retiring to reap the rewards of a well spent life. Angels look with admiration upon the scene, and God with approval. The contrast with its moral opposite, is infinite.

V. Let me say finally, that our *social* and *relative* condition is subject to the constant mutations of time. God has wisely connected us together, interlacing all parts of our personal existence with social ties. Society, and not solitude, is the natural and appropriate state of man. And yet, how ever varying are the social aspects of one's life! Look into the family, and note the changes of time. To-day it is a family: you see all its members present—parents and children, brothers and sisters, living under the same roof, and fed at the same board. In a few years, it will be a family no longer; death will place half of its members, perhaps more, in the grave; the remainder, by providence, will be scattered to

the four winds of heaven. Ordinarily, this change does not occur with the violence of a sudden convulsion ; it comes about by the steady action of time. Parents worn out in the journey of life, sink into their graves ; while surviving children, separated from each other, and having entered into new relations, become practical strangers to the scenes of their childhood. There is the *homestead*, and around it gather a thousand touching memories ; every hill and every valley, the trees, the fences, and the road, all seem like old acquaintances ; yet, where is the family, that group of beings once so tenderly associated with you in every article of this scene ? Ah ! my hearers, where is it ? It is *nowhere*. It has now no existence, as it then had ; it is literally gone from the face of the earth. The times have passed over it, and swept it all away. It was the thing of but a transient moment, and with the lapse of that moment, it has fled forever. To one who has any tenderness of domestic feeling—who can avoid having it ?—this is a most affecting change in his social condition. Though now a man, and perhaps not wishing to be a child again, still he cannot recall the past without moralizing upon life, and feeling the glow of peculiar sentiments in his heart.

If we look beyond the family, and study our relations to others in whom we may have had some interest, perhaps a very strong one, we are brought to the same result. What a changing thing that is, which we call the circle of our acquaintance ! It is always a circle, and embraces a given number of beings ; yet, the persons who compose it, do not long remain the same. Familiar faces are retiring, and strange ones taking their place ; old friends are stepping out, and new ones stepping in. Deaths, removals, and sometimes the unhappy misunderstandings of life, keep our social existence in the state of constant fluctuation. Not a year elapses without leaving its distinct impress ; and when we put together a number of years, the effect is solemnly visible. Where are the companions of one's boyhood, those whom he loved to meet, and with whom he sported in the season of youth ? Where are the associates of his riper years, those with whom he once mingled in the walks of business ? What has become of the former friends and acquaintance of the man who is now threescore years and ten ? Nearly all of them have disappeared ; some of them are among the dead, and the others are scattered up and down the earth. Change, steady, constant, and unintermitted change, is continually passing over the face of what we call the social circle. It is always in motion. And but for our capacity to transfer our affections to new objects, and become interested in those with whom we are familiar ; but for that general feeling of humanity, which agreeable contact may speedily ripen into friendship, we should suffer most seriously from this incessant variableness of our social existence.

So also the *fortunes* of life, as wrought out in the bosom of society, to a great extent observe the same law. Even the most successful man has his zenith, towards which he gradually ascends ; and then from which as gradually descends into the vale of years, the decrepitude of age, and finally the silence of the tomb. The skilful merchant cannot keep trading always ; or the able lawyer pleading always ; or the distinguished statesman always commanding a nation's ear. They will at length work themselves out ; and having had their day, however prosperous or brilliant, they reach the point at which they must disappear, and give place to

others. They withdraw from the active crowd; their names cease to be mentioned, and soon their position among men, with all its bustle and importance, lies in the sepulchre of extinct humanity. And besides this natural course of events, there are in the lives of many men severe reverses—hard, trying, and disastrous crises of existence. Their calculations fail them; perhaps, supposed friends betray them; possibly their own prodigality or folly has ruined them; the times pass over them, and what they once were, they are no longer, having suffered the severest disappointment where perchance they expected the greatest success. They have occasion to learn by sore experience, that this is a very changing world, and that the fortune which smiles to-day, may withhold its smile to-morrow. One would think, that all men, by contemplating the contingencies of life, especially those terrible side flaws to which we are constantly exposed, might become sufficiently wise to seek a higher and more lasting good than it is the province of earth to give. All temporal values are too uncertain to merit the supreme attachments of the soul. The family decays; the circle of our acquaintance is ever changing; our fortunes in life sweep through the widest variations, sometimes shocking us with volcanic power, and always advancing to a final terminus; every worldly good has its date and its doom; and shall we not, then, seek something which the hand of time cannot disturb? This would seem to be wise.

These, my brethren, are the thoughts with which I meet you on this first sabbath of the new year. The change, the constant change of body, intellect, sensibility, character, and social condition, as the years roll by us, is a theme pertinent to the hour. We surely have more to do with time, than simply to measure it. Its effects upon us form the interesting question. Let us bear in mind, that these effects do not lie mainly in striking and long remembered incidents, that occur but occasionally; they are far more dependent upon causes that never tire, too regular to be spasmodic, and often so familiar as to pass unnoticed. Our own continued existence forms the unbroken line, along which these causes accumulate and transmit their power. As long as we live, their effects must live, pursuing us to whatever world we may go, and in whatever circumstances placed.

What, then, are we this morning, as the result of those changes, to which we have been subject during the pilgrimage of life? We are not by any means what we were when we began to breathe; nor shall we long remain what we now are. Though time destroys not our essential identity of body or spirit, it is nevertheless with every beating pulse making its mark upon our existence. Such has been our history in the past; and such it must be in the future, onward to that solemn moment when our connection with earth will come to a close. Our rapidly receding years are lessening the space between the present and the mortal hour; and soon that time will come, which to us will be the end of time. The never dying principle of mental existence, with its enduring character, having passed the period of its earthly discipline and received its immortal stamp, is the only thing that will survive the strange, mysterious, awful shock of death—the last and the greatest of the changes which Heaven has assigned to our lot. This will live in another world, all life, all thought, all bliss or woe, when the body that once contained and impri-

soned it, shall be taking its long sleep in the bosom of its mother-earth. Tell me, then, hearer, what is to be the effect of time upon your soul—the real and imperishable being within you that decay cannot reach, and whose longevity even eternity cannot exhaust? Will it rear a moral pyramid of blessings whose lofty summit shall be bathed in heavenly light, gilding and glorifying your existence, through ages of such amazing remoteness as to defy calculation, and bewilder thought? Or will it consign you to that world of sorrows where hope is unknown, and happiness an eternal stranger? These questions should come home with thrilling consequence; and I am persuaded, that you cannot better employ the opening hours of this year, than in seeking an answer. Suppose you spend the remainder of life substantially as you have spent the last year, what, then, will be the issue in eternity? Are you a Christian? Have you made God your friend, and sought his favor according to the plan of his Gospel? If not, you do well to see where you are, to take counsel at the bar of truth, and flee for grace to the Christian altar, ere you are doomed beyond the reach of effort or the call of mercy. May God so teach us to number our days, that we shall apply our hearts unto wisdom.

HYMN.

By cool Siloam's shady rill
 How sweet the lily grows;
 How sweet the breath, beneath the hill,
 Of Sharon's dewy rose!

Lo! such the child, whose early feet
 The paths of peace have trod,
 Whose secret heart, with influence sweet,
 Is upward drawn to God.

By cool Siloam's shady rill
 The lily must decay;
 The rose that blooms beneath the hill,
 Must shortly fade away.

And soon, too soon, the wintry hour
 Of man's maturer age,
 Will shake the soul with sorrow's power,
 And stormy passions rage.

O Thou who givest life and breath,
 We seek thy grace alone,
 In childhood, manhood, age, and death,
 To keep us still thine own.

—HEBER.

SERMON DCXLI.

BY REV. W. S. TYLER,
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CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN.

"For our conversation is in Heaven."—PHIL. iii. 20.

THE word rendered conversation in this passage properly denotes, not what we commonly express by conversation, social intercourse, nor exactly what the word meant in the age of Elizabeth and James, habitual conduct and manner of life. Its primary signification is citizenship. It expresses the relation of a citizen to his native country—to the commonwealth of his love and choice. It is radically the same with that which Aristotle and Plato used to designate their Model State, and also with that which the Apostle Paul employs, when he speaks of "the commonwealth of Israel." The commonwealth of true Israelites and the commonwealth of true Christians are one and the same. There is a republic more spiritual than that of Plato, better arranged and better governed than that of Aristotle, wiser than the community of philosophers; conversant with higher themes and sustaining more honorable relations, than the republic of letters. And it is not, like the imaginary republics of ancient philosophers, merely an idea, a fancy, a dream, an utopia without any real or possible existence. We can point it out in actual being. We can show, where its territory lies, and what is its capital, and who is its chief magistrate, and who its citizens, and what are its laws, and what its aim and end and future destiny. And when we have done so, we shall endeavor to impress on our own hearts and on the hearts of our hearers, the practical conviction, that it is a question of paramount concern to us, what are our obligations and relations to this great commonwealth.

I. Touching the locality of this republic, or the seat of government, we have the declaration of our text, that it is in heaven.

Its *territory*, in the broadest sense, is the universe. This and all worlds belong to the Sovereign of the State, and he has given them to his people. The earth is the Lord's, and he has given it to his saints. The heavens are his and all their countless hosts. The stars are his, for he made them and peopled them with all their holy and happy inhabitants. Some of the angels rebelled against his government, but they wrested from him none of his territory. They were cast out of heaven, and hell is but the prison in which he keeps them against the day of judgment. Mankind, also, have disobeyed his commands and set up a government for themselves. But this alienation of a portion of his dominions, if such it may be called, is only temporary—only apparent. The earth is still his, and it shall be the inheritance of his children—the possession of his saints. But their proper country—that about which cluster all the

hallowed associations of citizenship, and home and native land—is in heaven. We know little of it. We only know it is a goodly land, a better country than the most salubrious, and fertile, and beautiful, of all on the face of the earth. It is the heavenly Canaan, and in comparison with it, the earthly Canaan, that land of the olive and the vine, the palm tree and the cedar—that land of fountains and of streams of water, of rich fields and fat pastures, flowing with milk and honey, is but a barren desert. And the capital is the New Jerusalem, built on Mount Zion above, whose walls are of precious stones, and the gates pearls, and the streets pure gold. And with all the magnificence of a city beautiful and glorious beyond compare, it unites all the attractions of a rural scenery, such as never delighted the eye of mortal here below. In the midst of the golden streets flows the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal; and on either side of the river, grows the tree of life in long succession, with all its rich variety of form and fruit and foliage; beautiful to look upon, refreshing to sit beneath, its fruit immortality, and its very leaves for the healing of the nations. There is no temple in it. The city, the country, is all sacred with the presence of God, and that *presence* is the temple, where God is worshipped, not at a distance, not through forms and ordinances, and outward means; not in the costliest structure human hands can rear, nor even in that magnificent cathedral, lighted with suns and stars, which is his own handiwork, but in himself—himself a wall of fire round about, himself a light and glory in the midst. And there is no sea there—no barren surface, no pathless deep, no stormy wave, no restless heaving bosom; but all the soil is fruitful and all the air is peace. And there is no night there; they no longer need it for sleep, for there labor is rest, and activity, repose. They no longer need it, as we do here, to reveal to them those worlds of light, which darkness shows us, but which are never seen by day; for there darkness is not the appointed precursor of light, nor evil the necessary means of a greater good. And the city has no need of lamps to light it, nor of the sun or moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the gates are never shut, and yet there never enters it anything that defileth. For the whole country around is the paradise of God—a paradise of purity and beauty, of health and happiness, in comparison with which, all the real and all the fabled paradises of oriental wealth and power, and splendor, deserve not to be named; and even the garden of man's primeval innocence and bliss is but a faint type and shadow of the celestial Eden.

II. The head of this commonwealth, or the Sovereign of this kingdom (for while in one view it is a republic, in another it is more properly a kingdom) is God, the almighty maker, proprietor and ruler of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who to an intrinsic and inalienable right to reign over all his creatures, adds every possible qualification of a perfect moral Governor—omniscience to discern all their wants, omnipresence to be with them all at all times and places, omnipotence to supply all their necessities, infinite goodness that desires the virtue and happiness of every creature; inflexible justice that will not at all acquit the guilty; such unspotted holiness, as turns with unspeakable abhorrence from the least sin, and yet such unbounded love and mercy as welcomes back

the returning prodigal, and rejoices over him as a lost child found, as a son that was dead made alive.

The government over this revolted province of his dominions is administered chiefly by his Son, who possesses some peculiar adaptations and wonderful qualifications for this office. Originally divine and equal with the Father, he became human and placed himself on a level with man, that he might be a mediator betwixt God and man, and lay his hands upon them both. He honored the broken law of God by suffering its penalty in his own person: He redeemed the lost race of man by dying in their stead. And now, having risen from the dead, he lives and reigns, head over all things, at once for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of his people, ever uniting in himself every divine attribute with every human sympathy and experience.

Nor shall we have comprehended the whole economy of this government in its marvellous adaptation to human necessities, till we bring into view a third agent, who comes still nearer to the hearts of men and yet sustains the same intimate and indissoluble union with the Father. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to communicate to men the rights and privileges of citizenship; to instruct them also in their relations and duties; to adopt them into the Christian Commonwealth, and give them the spirit of adoption; to write the laws on their hearts and dispose them to obedience; in a word, to perform all the most spiritual functions of government, and rule within them on earth, as the Father reigns over them in heaven, and the Son governs for them, at once their representative and their ruler, at the Father's right hand.

III. The citizens are all holy beings throughout the universe. There is first the innumerable company of angels, the messengers of God's will, the ministers of his power, the armies that fight his battles and maintain his government, the thrones, and dominions, and principalities and powers, that encircle his throne and cast their crowns at his feet. Then there is the general assembly and church of the first born and the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven, the long line of patriarchs and prophets and apostles, the noble army of the martyrs, the sacramental host of the Lord's anointed of every age, the wise and good of all the dead selected and gathered out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. All these dwell on Mt. Zion, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Then there are the choicest spirits on earth, all true believers of every clime, all spiritual Christians of whatever denomination, all who have repented of sin and washed it away in atoning blood, all the followers of Christ and the friends of God, of whatever age or sex, creed or condition in life. Moreover, there is good reason to believe, though we cannot know, that there are myriads of other worlds peopled by myriads of myriads of holy beings, all of whom belong to this vast kingdom of God, and Commonwealth of saints.

IV. It follows from the foregoing, that the only right or title to citizenship in this Commonwealth is holiness. Nothing unholy or impure can ever enter the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Citizenship is therefore the *birthright* of angels. They were born or created holy, and therefore born citizens. Some of

them, however, kept not their first estate. Aspiring to be Gods, they fell from the felicities of angels. Ambitious of power and pre-eminence, they lost even the equal rights and privileges of citizens.

Citizenship was also the birthright of Adam, and he would have bequeathed it to his posterity; but he disobeyed the divine command, sold his birthright for the forbidden fruit, and involved all his offspring in the dreadful forfeiture. What was lost, however, in the first Adam, was recovered by the second: when the Lord Jesus Christ undertook for us, he redeemed the forfeited blessing, and gave power to as many as believed on him to become the sons of God, and heirs of heaven. United to him by faith, born again of his Spirit, the Christian is a new creature and another man, subject to none of the forfeitures incurred by the first father of mankind, and entitled to all the immunities purchased by the Head of the church. Neither is there any other way for sinful men to attain to these high privileges. No forms and ceremonies, no works of righteousness which they can do, can expiate the broken law, or regain the lost prize. "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No rank of birth, no post of power, no height of fame, no attainment of knowledge can introduce him into the Commonwealth of Israel. He must be "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

But this way is open to all. The prize is placed within the reach of every son and daughter of Adam. The richest cannot buy it, but the poorest may receive it as a free and unmerited gift. The proudest monarch must be born again, before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven; and the humblest peasant may enter on the same condition. None is too guilty and defiled to be cleansed by the washing of regeneration: and none is pure enough without justification by faith in Jesus Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Ghost. Unlike any other Republic, the Commonwealth of the faithful makes character the only basis of citizenship, and allows of no other distinction. Age, sex, rank, fortune, forms, features, outward badges, external relations are nothing; while repentance, faith, love, holiness, the state of the heart, the moral and religious character—these are everything. Whoever will, may become a citizen in this great Commonwealth, on the single condition that he will begin and continue to lead a holy life.

V. The government is of course monarchical. It must be so. There is but one being, who has the power or the right to govern the universe: and if all power is concentrated in the hands of one, it is simply because all right and all excellence reside in the same. None but he who created the world can sustain and govern it. A universal kingdom must have an omnipresent king. A universal law demands an omniscient lawgiver and judge. A government of perfect justice and holiness, wisdom and goodness, can be administered only by a Being infinite in every perfection. The happiness, the safety, the very existence of his creatures, not less than his own glory, is suspended on God's absolute, unchangeable and eternal dominion over all the works of his hands. His abdication would involve their ruin. His dethronement would pull down the pillars of the moral, as well as the material universe. Infinitely exalted above all his crea-

tures, he *must* rule over all, and take counsel of none. He can neither be resisted nor aided in his plans. He is alike incapable of doing wrong himself, and of countenancing it in others. "He cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." His is the only monarchy in existence, which realizes the proper idea of a monarchy, as it was conceived by the greatest political philosopher of antiquity. Democracy, says Aristotle, is the government for a people who all stand on a common level as to intellectual and moral worth. A State in which the aggregate of intelligence and virtue resides principally in a few families, is fitted to be an aristocracy. And on the same principle, a monarchy is theoretically just and proper only, where one man or one family surpasses the combined talent, learning, and excellence of the nation. It need not be said, that this demand is answered fully, and infinitely more than answered in the government of God, and nowhere else. He is infinitely wiser, better, greater than all the subjects of his government throughout the universe which he has made. There is in him a greater aggregate, not only of excellence, but of being and blessedness. His existence and happiness are worth more, of more intrinsic value than the sum-total of created existence and happiness. Add to this the consideration, that the existence and happiness of his creatures are inseparably bound up in his; and it becomes not more a matter of necessity and right, than it is a thing to be coveted and desired, that he should be sole monarch alike in the kingdoms of nature, of providence and of grace.

VI. Yet it is a constitutional monarchy; a government of law. Precluded by his own all-perfect nature from error and wrong-doing, God has further limited himself, if I may so speak, by giving to mankind a written revelation of his plans of wisdom and his purposes of mercy to our world. Or, rather this revelation, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is a transcript of those limitations, which his own eternal and unchangeable perfections prescribe for all his actions. This Bill of Rights and Statute-book of duties, he will never contravene nor annul. Comply with the terms, and all his promises will be fulfilled. Disregard his threatenings, and sooner or later the threatened vengeance will surely overtake you. Obey, and live: disobey, and die. Believe, and be saved: disbelieve, and be damned. These are the alternatives—and they are fixed as the foundations of the earth—unchangeable as the order of the heavens. He will never depart from them himself, nor will he suffer his creatures to do so with impunity. He will abide by the constitution and laws himself, and he will never suffer them to be infringed by his creatures.

VII. When we direct our attention to the mutual relations of the citizens in this Commonwealth, we find that they are all on a footing of perfect equality. In this view, it is indeed a Commonwealth, a Republic, the most perfect on earth, and in fact the source and pattern of all other well regulated republics. It admits of no hereditary, no artificial distinctions. It recognizes no superiority but that of moral excellence: no dignity but that of office, and this only by the choice and with the sanction of the people. "Ye know," says our Lord, to the model community of his disciples—"Ye know, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them—

but it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister : and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. But he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant." In the Christian community, there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, male nor female ; but all are one in Christ Jesus. The pious slave is the Lord's freeman ; the Christian prince or chief magistrate, is the Lord's servant. The pastor is but a minister *in* office, and out of the discharge of his official duties, nothing above any other Christian. On the other hand, every Christian is a priest to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Jesus Christ. There are no kings and no priests in the Christian Commonwealth : or rather all are kings and all priests—a royal priesthood, combining those highest and most sacred functions even here, and destined to be kings and priests unto God and the Lamb, and reign with him forever and ever.

VIII. Moreover, though the government is an absolute monarchy, yet the people enjoy the most perfect freedom. Though God reigns by intrinsic and inalienable right, yet he is the king of every citizen's choice. He reigns, not more, not so much over their persons and concerns, as in their hearts ; and it is their will and pleasure that he should rule both in and over them with supreme, unbounded sway. His will is theirs ; and nothing can befall them, nothing can transpire around them, that does not on the whole please them, because it pleases Him. Nor is it external liberty alone that they enjoy : just so far as they are holy, they possess spiritual liberty—moral freedom, freedom of the will ; freedom to choose what reason dictates and conscience commands ; the free play of all the faculties, each in its appropriate sphere ; the spontaneous outgoing and action of the whole man in accordance with the laws of his being, for his being's end and aim. Oh, that is true liberty, and all else is bondage. Whom Christ maketh free, he is free indeed, and other men are slaves.

IX. The end of all good government, is the honor of the government and the well-being of the governed ; and such is the end of God's government both in the church and the world ; both on earth and in heaven. Though infinitely exalted above his creatures, yet he has linked his glory with their holiness and happiness. He seeks his glory *in* their holiness and happiness, and they can find holiness and happiness only in beholding, exhibiting, and promoting *his* glory. In his immutable purpose, in the very nature of things, as he has constituted them, these ends are one and indivisible. They advance or recede—they stand or fall together. Nay, they *never* recede in reality ; whatever may be the appearance to human view, they are always advancing steadfastly and irresistibly to their glorious consummation. They will *not* fall, but will stand firm and immovable, when the heavens and the earth, and all else that *can* be shaken—shall have passed away. For who can resist the government, and prevent it from attaining its ends ? Who can elude omniscience, or baffle omnipotence ? And how can infinite goodness, guided by infinite wisdom, fail to secure the best ends by the use of the fittest means ? Individuals may be lost, but the universe will be saved. Justice may demand the punishment of a part, but wisdom and goodness will overrule that very punish-

ment for the benefit of the whole. The incorrigibly wicked must perish, but all who confess and forsake their sins will find mercy, and will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Not one true believer will be overlooked or suffered to perish. Every one has the promise and the pledge of Him who cannot lie, that all things shall work together for his good on earth. And he will at length gather all the Commonwealth of the faithful—the holy of all ages and all nations, of all provinces and all worlds throughout his universal empire, around his throne in heaven, where they will see their holiness and happiness secured, His character and glory without a stain, and all the ends of His government consummated in the everlasting communion of the holy and happy universe, with their more holy and happy Creator. “Father,” says the Son of God, in that intercessory prayer, which cannot fail of its full accomplishment—“Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which I had with thee before the world was.” He has gone to prepare a place for them in his Father’s house, “where are many mansions:” And when they have overcome in their earthly conflicts, they will “sit down with him in his throne, even as he also overcame, and sat down with his Father in his throne.”

Our subject so abounds in practical inferences and applications, that we can do little more than state them in their connection with what has already been said, and then leave them to make their own impression on your hearts.

1. How great are the honors and privileges of citizenship in such a Commonwealth as we have so imperfectly described—such a *country*, even a heavenly,—such a *city*, which hath foundations—whose builder and maker is God. Such a sovereign, the blessed and only Potentate, the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the only wise, the only good; the Almighty. Such citizens, all the wise and good spirits of earth—all the saints and angels in heaven—all the holy and happy throughout the universe! Holiness, the only title to citizenship—holy love, the common bond of union to each other and to their King! The most implicit obedience, united with the most perfect freedom! An absolute monarchy, where one alone has the right, the power, or the wish to reign, meeting and blending with a pure republic, in which liberty, equality and fraternity—the mere dream of earthly republics, are fully realized. A government administered by perfect sovereignty, and yet according to just and equal laws, and harmonizing, nay, identifying those usually irreconcilable interests—the honors and prerogatives of the sovereign, with the rights and privileges of the people, establishing both on a common immutable basis; securing both with infallible certainty, and to eternal ages. Who would not belong to such a Commonwealth? Who would not be a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God? Who, when the terms of admission are so easy and practicable to all; when the gates are thrown so widely open, who will consent to remain an alien from the Commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world? Let others boast of their Roman or American citizenship, but ever be it our exultation that our citizenship is in heaven.

2. But in connection with the honors and privileges, we must not forget the duties and responsibilities of citizens. Rights and duties are ever correlative. Privileges and responsibilities, like favors and obligations, must always be commensurate. Are we free? Then are we also responsible. Have we received freely? Freely should we also give. Have we been entrusted with much? Then we have much for which we must give account. Oh, what a trust is ours! The interests of such a kingdom! The honor of such a King! The edification of the church! The conversion of the world! The salvation of men! The glory of God! Who is sufficient for these things? No mortal of himself. But there is no insufficiency in God! Jesus Christ strengthening us, we can do all things. The responsibility is with us, the strength with Him. Duties are ours, results are His—and His will be the glory.

To enter a little more particularly into the duties that grow out of this relation, I observe:

3. Is our citizenship in heaven? Then we must be a peculiar people. Every nation on earth has its distinctive features—its physiognomy, costume, language, laws, manners, customs, genius, spirit, are all more or less peculiar. How much more a Commonwealth whose seat and centre is in heaven? whose citizens are born by a new, celestial birth? How strange, if such a people should not have a face radiant with heavenly light, shining like that of Moses when he came down from the mount of God; a language which others cannot speak or even understand—laws written on their hearts, of more than human wisdom and love—manners of unearthly attractiveness—customs with which the stranger intermeddleth not—a genius and spirit that savors less of earth than heaven. And they *have*. You may not have eyes to see it. You may mistake the men. Many who bear the name, may not belong to the number of the faithful. But there *are* those in whom the blindest must see it—the most perverse must acknowledge it. God and their Christian brethren may discover more or less of the distinctive features and spirit in others. All true believers develop it more and more clearly in this world, and will manifest it perfectly in heaven. And they who profess to be citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel, and yet cannot be distinguished from the surrounding Gentiles—those who profess to be Christians and have their conversation in heaven, while they live just like men of the world, only deceive themselves, and expose themselves to the contempt of others; for true Christians *must* be a peculiar people.

4. Is our citizenship in heaven? Then we are but strangers and pilgrims here, and should live as such. We are not of the world, and it ill becomes us to set our affections on worldly things. We belong to a better country. We are citizens of no mean city—we were born there—thither we are destined soon to return. There is our capital and there our King. There is our Father, and there our home.

“There our best friends—our kindred dwell,
There God, our Saviour, reigns.”

Our treasure is there: yes, and our hearts are there also. And shall we

sell our heavenly birthright for an earthly inheritance? Shall we renounce our citizenship in heaven, and seek a country on earth? Shall we build our house beneath the skies, and think no more of home, our Father's house,—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? No, we are children of a King. We are heirs to a kingdom and an inheritance that is incorruptible. And we will trample under foot these meaner things, and set our faces, turn our thoughts, lift our affections upwards. Our minority will soon be over, our education soon complete, and then our Elder Brother will come for us, and take us to our Father's house. Then we shall be installed and crowned. And we will live waiting for his glorious appearing—looking for, and hasting unto the blessed hope.

5. Is our citizenship in heaven? Then we should keep under our bodies and mortify our members which are upon the earth, and cherish only the better part, the spiritual nature, which will be the chief seat and source of our happiness in heaven. I bring out this topic distinctly by itself, though nearly related to the last, because it is precisely the topic on which the Apostle is chiefly insisting in the context. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation (our commonwealth, our citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." This vile body must be changed, spiritualized, fashioned like Christ's glorified body, before it can enter heaven. Why then waste your time and talents and substance in adorning it, in feeding it, in pampering its appetites and passions, in nursing the flesh into a more delicate morsel for worms, and only making it more unfit for heaven—nay, perhaps making it the everlasting clog and prison of your soul, that shall sink it to a lower place in perdition?

6. Is our citizenship in heaven? Then we should love one another. This is the duty of all good citizens. It is especially the duty and the privilege of fellow-citizens in a foreign land—and most of all in an enemy's country. How delightful to meet a countryman in foreign travel! How welcome is the very sight of his person, clad in the national costume! How pleasant to scan the familiar features of the national physiognomy in his face! How refreshing to hear the sound of his voice, to drink in once more those familiar words and those characteristic tones, that speak of home and native land, to learn from him the latest news, to talk over with him the state and prospects of a beloved though distant, country, and if possible, to cast in our lot with his and prosecute our journey together, till we arrive at the city which gave us birth! And how intimate and endearing is the tie that unites natives of the same country, in a temporary residence abroad! They may be personally unacquainted. They may never have seen or heard of each other before. They may have no common interests or pursuits. They may be united by no other tie.

Enough that they are countrymen. This is a sufficient introduction to an acquaintance—this a sufficient bond of union. They meet to give and receive intelligence from home. They converse about the past history and the present state of the fatherland. They dwell on the pleasant places, the goodly heritage, the sacred associations, the hallowed recollections, the familiar scenes from which they are exiled for a season, refreshing each other's memories, stirring each other's affections, till their hearts are all on fire with one passion, all melted into one desire; and that is the desire of returning home. Let them be shut up in an *enemy's* country, immured in the walls of a prison, or condemned to hard labor in the mines, if permitted to meet a few moments every evening, or an hour every week, how would they rush into each other's arms and cling to each other's embrace! With what intense interest, would they inquire after each other's state and ask for news of the progress of the war, and mingle their tears of sorrow or of joy at the successes or the reverses of their country's arms, and bow their faces together before the God of battles—their fathers' God—that he would speed the right and soon bring the struggle to a triumphant issue. And when separated, how would they long and wait for the return of another of those weekly seasons of sweet communion and fervent prayer! Christian, hast thou a country beyond the swelling flood, all dressed in living green? Hast thou a city above the skies, whose walls are salvation and her gates praise! And does it not gladden thy inmost heart to fall in with a fellow traveler through the world, who speaks the same language, who loves the same country, and serves the same king, who brings thee tidings from home, and who will accompany thee in more or less of the remainder of thy journey! Art thou a sojourner in a strange land, and wilt thou not press a countryman to thy bosom? art thou a captive and a prisoner in an *enemy's* country, and wilt thou not delight to meet thy fellow captives at every possible opportunity, and pour out thy whole soul in unison with them, in good wishes and earnest prayers for the common country's cause? Ah, brethren, if we entered into the spirit of our relations, as citizens of the celestial city, and yet strangers and pilgrims for a season on earth, should we not love one another more? Would any tie whatever, which might bind us, however closely, to any citizens of the world, be so close and so tender, as that which unites us to each other?

7. Is our citizenship in heaven? Then it becomes us to love our country and our king. With such a country, patriotism is piety. With such a king, loyalty is devotion. To live for them is the highest virtue and the most sacred duty. To die for them is the greatest privilege and the truest glory. Here patriotism and philanthropy, liberty and religion, all meet, and call at once for their heroes and their martyrs; offer at once the cross and the crown. Christian, no mortal ever stood in such lofty relations—none was ever invited to so sublime a service as thyself. The representative of no ordinary country, the soldier of no earthly prince, conduct yourself as a citizen worthy of your high calling; illustrate the Commonwealth of believers in the eyes of the world; fight manfully the good fight of faith; bear ever with you the commission of the King of kings, and spread far and near the triumphs of his Kingdom among the nations of the earth.

But last of all and most of all, for it is our greatest personal concern, let us weigh well, each one for himself, the import of that question which we have so often repeated with our lips: *Is our citizenship in heaven? Are we—are we fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God?* That is the great question. No matter how glorious the kingdom, if we do not belong to it. No matter how great and good the king, if he is not *our* king; if he does not reign in our hearts, it is nothing to us. And it would seem, that this question might be easily settled; if we did not know that so many have been deceived. Have we been born again, created anew unto good works? Have we repented of sin and forsaken it—renounced the world and given ourselves away to God through Jesus Christ? Do we trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for acceptance? Have we any personal holiness, as the fruit and proof of the indwelling Spirit? Are we a peculiar people, as different from the rest of mankind, as heaven is from earth? Do we feel and act like strangers and pilgrims here below, ever looking, longing, journeying, hasting towards a better country? Do we mortify our bodies? Are we dead to the world and the flesh? Do we love one another as Christians? Do we live for the honor of God and the interest of his Kingdom, being comparatively dead to self and every other object? Are our hearts in heaven? Is our conversation there?

HYMN.

Our country is Immanuel's ground,
We seek that promised soil:
The songs of Zion cheer our hearts,
While strangers here we toil.

Oft do our eyes with joy o'erflow,
And oft are bathed in tears;
Yet nought but heaven our hopes can raise,
And nought but sin our fears.

The flowers that spring along the road
We scarcely stoop to pluck;
We walk o'er beds of shining ore,
Nor waste one wishful look.

We tread the path our Master trod,
We bear the cross he bore;
And every thorn that wounds our feet,
His temples pierced before.

—BARBAULD.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Varied and expressive are the titles under which the Saviour is pleased to present himself, to win the regard of those whom he came to save. He took upon himself the form of a servant when he assumed our nature, and he is willing to take upon himself any name, however humble, that will express his character and the offices he has come to perform. "I am the door," saith the Saviour, when he would show himself *the way* by which sinners may enter into life—into the mansions which are prepared for them that love God. "I am the vine," saith the Saviour, when he would illustrate the union of the branches, the members of his body, *believers* with himself. They partake of the root and the fatness of the vine, and the streams of life flow to them through him.

"*I am the good shepherd!*" Mark the tenderness of the expression—the *good shepherd*! In other passages than this the same figure is employed to express the peculiar care which the Lord Jesus feels and exercises for his people; but here it is announced with special strength, as if the Saviour would assure his disciples that he is theirs to the sacrifice of himself for their sake. "The good shepherd," saith he, "giveth his life for the sheep." In the eastern world the force of this passage is doubtless more clearly seen than here. We do not appreciate the feelings of the shepherd to his flock. *There*, it is true, that a shepherd often knows the countenance of each sheep, though he may have a vast flock under his care. He gives names to each one of them, and they all *know* their names, and come at his call, and eat from his hand, and follow him whithersoever he goeth. In danger they fly to him for protection, and feel safe when near to him, to be guarded from the invader; and he is ready to defend them as he would be to guard his own fireside from the assault of a ruthless foe. He takes tender care of the little ones. He nurses the feeble; he lays the lambs in his bosom. This is often seen: a shepherd coming home with a lamb in his arms—a lamb that requires more tender nursing than it could receive on the mountains; and the good shepherd would watch it and care for it, as if it were a child of his. A stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers; but the voice of their own shepherd they know, and when he speaks they hear, as if a father's voice was in the air.

Now this is a most apt and beautiful figure of Christ. It almost ceases to be a figure and becomes a sweet reality, when we think of the exceeding force of the illustration. Christ is a shepherd in his watchfulness over his people. "I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine." It is sweet for us to feel that we are of his flock—that he has chosen us for his own—gathered us into his fold—set his mark upon us, and trained us to know and follow, obey and enjoy him. He is good. There is no doubt of it. He shows it daily, hourly, every moment. He saw us wandering on the mountains; he came to seek and save the lost, and he found us ready to perish. He took us in his arms; he laid us in his bosom; he brought us home to himself, and nurtured us with more than parental love and care.

He is the good shepherd in guarding us from danger. Our enemies are many and mighty, and their wiles are so deceitful, that we should fall into the snares and perish, if the same grace that rescued us did not preserve us by the way.

He feeds his sheep! The finest of the wheat he has prepared for them. He calls them to his storehouse, and throws its doors wide open for them to enter and be filled. "He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." He gives them to drink of the rivers of waters that flow from the fountain of his exhaustless love. He leadeth them into green pastures and by the side of still waters. His mercy to them that fear and love him endureth for ever.

The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a shepherd's care;
His presence shall my wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noonday walks he shall attend,
And all my midnight hours defend.

When in the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant;
To fertile vales and dewy meads,
My weary, wandering steps he leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.

Though in the paths of death I tread,
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall know no ill,
For Thou, O Lord! art with me still:
Thy friendly rod shall give me aid,
And guide me through the dreadful shade.

The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. This crowns the evidence of his matchless goodness. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends! But while we were yet enemies, far from Christ, before we had become members of his flock and fold,

"This Jesus died to have us
Reconciled in him to God."

How near and tender the relationship in which this condescension on his part brings us! He suffers us to look to him as lambs to a shepherd who will feed, defend, and save his flock—will give his life for them, rather than suffer one of them to be plucked out of his hand. But if this be the relationship, there are obligations on us which we ought to feel—ties made strong and holy by his love and his blood, that should draw us near and still nearer to his feet. We should trust in him for safety, for strength, for daily food, for the bread that perisheth, and for the bread that cometh down from heaven, and for life everlasting. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. He is our great High Priest, and Prophet, and King.

These are some of the expressive types, and figures, and emblems, under which we are taught to regard the Saviour. Let us cling to him, and in our own sweet experience find him "the chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely."